

Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

11 March 1991

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Papal Statements on the Gulf War

After 17 January, John Paul II expressed regrets and unease about the war as often as several times a week. He was especially critical of air attacks that he said "indiscriminately threaten civilian populations." On 18 February, Vatican radio quoted the Pope as saying, "We are not pacifists at any cost. We desire peace and justice. There can be no peace without justice." [REDACTED]

Some Church leaders went further than the Pope. A spokesman for the Conference of Italian Bishops stated on 30 January that " . . . the Pope's position is clear . . . just or unjust, the war [must] be stopped immediately . . ." *L'Observatore Romano*, the semi-official Vatican newspaper, took a consistently pacifist line, and Catholic organizations marched conspicuously in antiwar demonstrations. [REDACTED]

The Church's criticism of the war posed a major challenge to Andreotti's five-party government. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The Communists, now renamed the Democratic Party of the Left, lost no time in exploiting the peace issue and seized on the papal statements in an attempt to gain influence with Catholic pacifists. [REDACTED]

Andreotti resisted the antiwar movement with support of his Foreign and Defense Ministers. He almost certainly viewed Rome's military contribution and financial assistance to the frontline states as part of Italy's coming of age as an important Western country. [REDACTED] antiwar sentiment, though worrisome, is manageable. [REDACTED]